

From Aviation Supply and Maintenance Officers to Aviation
Logisticians

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Logistics means having the right thing, at the right place, at the right time!¹ This definition does not specify a difference between aviation and ground logistics. Marine Corps ground logistics and aviation logistics both work to ensure Marines have assets they need when they need them. The Marine Corps aviation logistics field's officer corps is divided into two separate military occupational specialties (MOS) aviation supply officers (6602) and aviation maintenance officers (6002). These officers hold separate titles and billets but essentially are focused on the same tasks: aircraft readiness and supporting the war fighter. The United States Marine Corps should combine the unrestricted aviation supply and aviation maintenance officer fields into the single aviation logistics field in order to provide combatant commanders a diversified aviation logistics community, a more flexible personnel force, and more experienced senior leadership.

Background

Currently aviation maintenance and aviation supply officers have different responsibilities, initial technical training paths, and separate governing orders and policies.

¹ Logistics World, "What is logistics?", URL:<<http://www.logisticsworld.com/logistics.htm>>, accessed 04 December 2008.

Aviation supply officers (ASOs) are responsible for planning, directing, and controlling the performance and execution of all aviation supply functions within a Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), a Marine Aircraft Group (MAG), a Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS), and on various type model series (T/M/S) commander staffs.² Aviation supply officers are trained in Navy supply procedures and policies at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, GA. Their training is focused on aviation supply program management and familiarity with operation of various aviation logistics information management systems. Upon completion of the Aviation Supply Officers Basic course ASOs report to a MALS to receive on-the-job training as aviation supply officers. The MALS aviation supply department follows procedures set forth in Marine Corps Order P4400.177 Aviation Supply Desktop Procedures³ (ASDTP).

Aviation maintenance officers (AMOs) are responsible for the supervision and coordination of aircraft maintenance and repair activities within a MAW, a MAG, a MALS, a flying

² Powers, Rod, "Marine Corps Officers Job Descriptions", About.com, URL:<<http://usmilitary.about.com/od/officerj3/a/6607.htm>>, accessed 15 January 2009.

³ Aviation Supply Desktop Procedures (ASDTP)-P4400.177- A USMC derivation of the OPNAVINST P485 with the purpose to promulgate policies, procedures, and administrative instructions for the operation and management of a USMC Aviation Supply Department.

squadron, and on various type commander staffs.⁴ They are required to have a detailed working knowledge of Navy sponsored aviation maintenance programs and processes governed by OPNAVINST 4790.2 Naval Aviation Maintenance Procedures⁵ (NAMP). AMOs are trained onboard Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL. Their educational processes are focused on the teaching of program management of maintenance activities in accordance with standard operating procedures contained within the NAMP. AMOs report to a MALS upon completion of the Aviation Maintenance Officer Basic.

Current

Aviation supply officers and aviation maintenance officers require knowledge of both MOSs to effectively complete their daily mission of supporting aviators. An AMO needs to understand the aviation supply process and execution methods in order to effectively manage and plan a unit's aviation maintenance programs. Asset repairs require supply parts to rebuild items to a working state. Aviation maintenance Marines

⁴ Powers, Rod, "Marine Corps Officers Job Descriptions", About.com, URL:<[http:// usmilitary. about.com/od/o fficerj 3/a/6607.htm](http://usmilitary.about.com/od/officerj3/a/6607.htm)>, accessed 15 January 2009.

⁵ Naval Aviation Maintenance Procedures (NAMP)-OPNAVINST 4790.2- A five volume reference that governs the concepts, policies, organizations, maintenance support procedures, and organizational/intermediate level maintenance.

require supply knowledge to request repair parts and to understand the supply codes used to explain arrival times and locations of those requested parts. An ASO needs to understand the aviation maintenance repair processes and execution methods in order to effectively manage and plan a unit's aviation supply stock levels. Some parts required by end users are repaired at various maintenance facilities within the United States. Aviation supply Marines require maintenance knowledge to induct and track status of assets within the repair cycle at these various locations. This ensures stock levels are maintained adequately to support the end users requests. The separate MOSs do not receive formal training in both fields but are required to "self teach" throughout operational tours of duty.

The naval wide implementation of Enterprise AIRSpeed⁶ business practices is forcing the aviation logistics community to push away from a separatist mindset. The terms "aviation maintenance's problem" or "aviation supply's problem" will soon be phrases of the past. Restricted and unrestricted officers are being required to gain in-depth understanding of both supply and maintenance operating procedures, policies, and operational flow throughout the logistical chain. The current naval standards are being re-written to include tables of organization

⁶Enterprise AIRSpeed: The effective integration of Theory of Constraints management, LEAN Enterprise waste reduction program management, and Six Sigma defect variation management.

for "AIRSpeed change agents" and policies to cover mutual aviation supply and aviation maintenance process flow. AMOs and ASOs are being required to jointly fill billets that require an understanding of aviation supply and aviation maintenance as a whole, not separately.

The aviation logistics field has a MOS dedicated for the aviation logistics officer (6607). There are specific qualifications and schools that must be attended to be assigned the 6607 MOS. The aviation logistics field is open to aviation supply officers (6602) and aviation maintenance officers (6002), however, there are no Marines listed as having obtained this MOS within the Marine Corps.

Proposed

The two occupational fields are dependent on each other to accomplish the aviation logistics mission for tactical, operational, and strategic level aviation units. The combined occupational specialty would develop aviation logistics officers with cross training in the management of aviation maintenance and aviation supply programs. The single aviation logistics MOS would develop officers with understanding of operational logistics chain requirements from user level component repair to

theater wide push/pull asset demand. Formal training in one field would eliminate the "on-the-fly" training aviation supply and aviation maintenance officers are currently receiving. The future Marine aviation logistics plan states that aviation logistics will be guided by transformation objectives and principles in integration between the Navy and Marine Corps service logistics practices and cultivation of a closer bond between aviation and ground logistics.⁷ The development of true aviation logisticians through formal technical training, operational experience, and mentorship would align the community with these goals and would produce a more diversified aviation logistics population.

The aviation logistician would be provided with less restrictive billet opportunities in the fleet operating forces. The table of organization billets for aviation supply officers and aviation maintenance officers should be combined into aviation logistics officer's positions. These aviation logistics officer (6607) billets would provide aviation logistics squadron commanders with the ability to manage and mitigate officer manning shortage concerns. A supply department would no longer be over their table of organization while maintenance departments or flying squadrons assign Marines the

⁷Department of the Navy, United States Marine Corps. *DC Aviation Marine Aviation Plan*, Washington, DC 2005, 92.

collateral duty of a second division to operate. The aviation logistician would provide commanders with a more flexible personnel force.

The assignment of the aviation logistics officer MOS and elimination of the aviation supply officer and aviation maintenance officer MOSs would aide in technical development of future logistics squadron commanders. It would also prevent unrestricted officers from assuming command of aviation logistics squadrons and not having the time required to close the technical knowledge base curve of their specific specialty. The single aviation logistician field would provide unrestricted officers the ability to master functions of aviation logistics prior to reaching the colonel level.

Counterargument

The aviation logistics officer MOS (6607) is already available to aviation maintenance officers and aviation supply officers. Unrestricted officers should pursue the additional aviation logistics officer MOS on their own.

The current requirements to obtain the aviation logistics officer MOS go against the current unrestricted officer career progression. The aviation logistics officer MOS (6607) requires

attendance at U. S. Army logistics schools. Aviation supply officers and aviation maintenance officers do not have time to gain occupational field credibility and attend the Army logistics schools on their own time. An aviation maintenance officer or an aviation supply officer would have to sacrifice "fleet time" normally used to gain technical understanding of the aviation logistics field as a whole. Aviation logistics officers would receive the technical knowledge prior to their first fleet tour eliminating the need to attend the Army schools.

Conclusion

Most aviation supply officers and aviation maintenance officers already understand that more than a basic knowledge of these two complementing technical areas is required to provide aviation support to the war fighter. The official merge of aviation supply officers and aviation maintenance officers into the aviation logistics occupational specialty will enable a diversified logistics community and provide commanders, at all levels, a more flexible personnel force. The Naval AIRSpeed requirement to reduce costs and the Marine Corps continuous

requirement to do more with less only strengthens the argument for a more experienced senior aviation logistics leadership. Aviation logistics should be reviewed to ensure it is structured to win today's fight and enables the Marine Corps to win tomorrow's battles from the sea. Reorganization is not something the Marine Corps is opposed to; it takes pride in Marines' abilities to task organize towards mission accomplishment.

1487 words

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